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Strengthening American Agriculture

through RESOURCE CONSERVATION



Office of the Secretary

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON

November 23, 1953

In view of the forthcoming MID-CENTURY CONFERENCE ON RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE, it is my earnest desire to set forth Agriculture's views and goals regarding resource conservation.

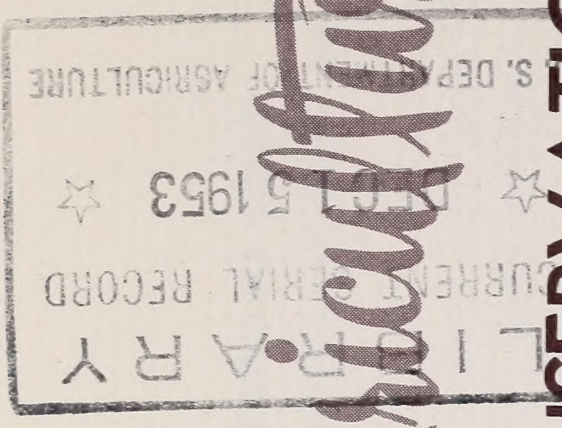
The Department of Agriculture recognizes a strong national program of soil, water, forest, and range conservation as one of the basic necessities of American agriculture. The demands upon our agricultural resources will grow heavier in the years ahead.

The statement on the following pages summarizes what we believe people want in a dynamic national program of resource conservation.

I hope these proposals will stimulate full and frank discussion. Comments and suggestions will be most welcome.

A large, stylized cursive signature of Ezra Taft Benson.

Ezra Taft Benson
Secretary of Agriculture



Strengthening American Agriculture

through RESOURCE CONSERVATION

foundation of the national economy

The soil, water, range, and forest resources of the United States are the foundation blocks in the structure of our national economy. From that base comes our food, most of our clothing, paper and other fiber, and much of our shelter.

How well we protect and improve these resources in the years ahead will have a direct bearing on our standard of living in the towns and cities as well as on the farms and ranches.

rising demands on land resources

The long-term needs of American agriculture are to reduce production costs, to improve quality, and to expand markets. The effectiveness with which these needs are met will depend in a large measure on how well we care for and improve our soil, water, range, and forest resources.

The demands upon agriculture will grow heavier. By 1975 we shall likely need the production equivalent of an additional 115 million acres of improved cropland to keep pace with the demands of a growing population. Present estimates are that we will fall short of that requirement by as much as 70 million acres. We do not have enough *new* land to fill that need.

To meet rising demands, we shall have to depend mainly on increasing the per-acre yields on our crop and pasturelands, and on our range and forest lands.

must increase per-acre yields

We know this can be done. The best farmers in all parts of the country are making their soils produce about double what the average farmer is producing. A major job ahead is to narrow that gap.

Modern resource conservation has broad meaning

progress made in learning solutions

In recent years we have learned a great deal about the causes of soil, watershed, forest, and range deterioration. We have learned a great deal about methods to combat these problems.

Modern conservation involves proper land use, protecting the soil against erosion and other forms of deterioration, correcting deficiencies of lime and plant nutrients, rebuilding eroded and depleted soils, protecting and improving forests and farm woodland, improving grasslands, conserving moisture for crop use, reducing flood and sediment damage, improving the quality and regularity of water yields, installing proper agricultural drainage and irrigation, and increasing crop yields and income—all at the same time.

combinations of practices required

It means putting into use on the land combinations of good practices—combinations fitted to the soil and water resources of each piece of land, and to the human resources and capabilities of each landowner or operator.

The practical attainment of conservation objectives involves the use of scientific knowledge in soils, engineering, agronomy, forestry, biology,

use and treatment must fit the land

. . . and the needs of the people

geology, economics, and other agricultural and related sciences.

Modern resource conservation means putting land to the uses for which it is best suited and applying the necessary practices to prevent deterioration, increase production, and build up soil productivity. It means making soils yield abundantly year in and year out for an indefinite period. It means a high-level sustained yield from forests. It means a more dependable supply of clear water in our streams.

In all this, modern programs for resource conservation take into account the problems of the people who use the land in making a living or in getting a return from the land as they strive to meet ever-changing consumer needs. The job we are doing in resource conservation involves human relationships, economic factors, and public welfare, as well as physical conditions.



**makes use of
other technologies**

Resource conservation is not fully effective without the wise use of machines, the breeding of better animals, the development of new and improved plant varieties and new chemicals, and improved technology in the utilization and marketing of the products.

Modern resource conservation further includes the planning and treatment of entire watersheds. That job is to gear together the management of crop, range, and forest lands, and the treatment of watercourses in the upper watersheds to minimize the damage of floods and sedimentation, and to improve the quality and regularity of water supplies. In watershed-protection programs, local people and organizations, both on the farms and in the towns and cities, must team up with local, State, and Federal governments to share the cost and work out improvements to benefit them all.

**modern conservation
geared to watersheds**



Local people have final responsibility

**everyone
has a stake**

Soil and water problems are urgent and their solution is difficult. The scientist and the legislator, the technician and the businessman, the educator and the sportsman—each has an important part of the job. All the people have a vital stake in the success of the national resource-conservation program.

The final responsibility, however, for carrying out a sound, vigorous program of conservation rests with the people who own and operate the land. Soil conservation districts, and other groups, locally organized and locally directed, provide effective mechanisms by which the conservation program can be locally managed and kept close to particular local needs. Teamwork is the key to a successful, productive program that will build and maintain strength in the land.

soil conservation districts

Government must supplement local efforts

research and education essential

It is the responsibility of Federal and State agencies of government to bring to farmers, ranchers, and other landowners the kind of assistance in resource conservation they cannot provide for themselves.

In Federal research agencies and State experiment stations we are constantly finding better ways to protect and improve land resources. Through Extension Services, in vocational agriculture programs and other organizations, information and training are given to farmers and ranchers so they may profit quickly from the results of research.

technician joins farmer in planning

An effective conservation plan for any farm is unique for that farm. In developing and applying the plan farmers need skilled technical assistance in fitting and applying the technology of soil and water conservation to the individual farm.

credit and cost sharing

A well-planned program for resource conservation on a particular property often comprises practices requiring considerable capital investment or temporary economic sacrifices. Therefore, public and private credit better geared to the repayment potentials of conservation practices would aid materially on many farms.

Many farms and ranches urgently need conservation practices that will bring enduring benefits to the public as well as to the individual landowner. In such instances, cost sharing by the Government—particularly in the solution of community or watershed problems—may be necessary if the work is to be done in time to prevent further or irreparable loss of land resources.

USDA's part

It is the overall responsibility of the United States Department of Agriculture to make fullest and most economical use of basic technical data and knowledge for the Nation and for its varied resource areas by integrating technical assistance, cost sharing, and such other phases of conservation as may be in the national interest.

Three main resource-conservation jobs are ahead

1. Accelerate both research and education so that improvements in agricultural resources are obtained and passed quickly on to those who can use them.
2. Improve technical aid to landowners and operators and help speed up the survey of soil resources and the planning and application of needed conservation measures on the farm, ranch, and forest lands of this country—acre by acre and watershed by watershed.
3. Encourage local leadership such as is provided by soil conservation districts, watershed organizations, and other community and neighborhood teams of people.

conserving our resources is high-priority business for all

It will be our purpose to strengthen in every way possible the resource-conservation activities of the Department of Agriculture, including recommendation to the Congress of such legislation as may be considered necessary to improve that work.

Conserving and improving our soil, water, range, forest, and wildlife resources is high-priority business for all of us.

